

TENNESSEE AGRICULTURAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
Tennessee Cattle Improvement Initiative
PRODUCER GUIDELINES: Genetic and Cattle Handling Facilities

I. General Information:

The purpose of this program is to improve farm income in Tennessee and to facilitate participation with the national animal identification program. These goals will be achieved by providing cost share funds for cattle producers to upgrade the genetics of their cattle and install cattle handling equipment. Funding for the program was provided within Governor Bredeesen's budget and approved by the General Assembly.

The program consists of two major components: a cattle genetic improvement program and a cattle handling facilities program. Both programs utilize cost share incentives to encourage producers to improve herds and facilities.

Producer Cost Share Annual Maximums	Maximum
Genetics:	
Herd evaluation (cost up to maximum)	175.00
Lease/Purchase of Bull or Artificial Insemination (35% of cost up to maximum for genetic cost share)	700.00
Maximum for genetic cost share per year	875.00
Cattle Handling Facilities:	
Facilities or equipment (35% of cost up to maximum for facilities or equipment)	850.00
Maximum Facilities or Equipment cost share per year	850.00
Maximum per producer per year	1,725.00

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture has contracted with the University of Tennessee Extension Service to evaluate the improvement of selected herds that are a part of the cost share program. This evaluation will occur over a multi-year period. This evaluation is being conducted to ensure that the program is successful in building farm income.

II. Steps to Apply For Cost Share Reimbursement:

Step 1- Complete an Application for Cost Share Assistance through the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Cattle Improvement Initiative. Applications are available at UT Extension county offices and other locations; a copy can be downloaded and printed from the Department's website www.picktnproducts.org. This application should be completed and mailed to the Department's address shown on the application. Included within the application should be the premise identification number and the number from the card awarded upon completion of the Beef Quality Assurance program. All information called for on the form must be provided; incomplete information could cause an application to be disqualified.

Step 2- The application will be evaluated by staff of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the applicant will be notified of approval or disapproval for cost share assistance. Only projects that are approved in advance by the Department of Agriculture will be eligible for cost share assistance. If approved, the applicant will be sent an Authorization to Grantee and Project Record Form. It is important that the producer retain this form; it must be returned to the Department after successful completion of the authorized cost share work.

Step 3- Following the completion of the approved cost share project, the producer will complete and sign the Authorization to Grantee and Project Record Form and return it to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

- a. For reimbursement from the genetic improvement program, along with the Authorization to Grantee Form, the producer must supply a numbered and dated receipt containing buyer and seller information (names, addresses, telephone numbers of both buyer and seller), EPD or Lifetime Net Merit documentation, certification of a Breeding Soundness Evaluation and electronic identification tag number of the bull (for producers who purchase or lease bulls).
- b. For reimbursement from the cattle handling facility program, along with the Authorization to Grantee Form, the producer must submit a receipt showing cost of the item(s) purchased, date of purchase, description of the item(s) purchased and names, addresses and telephone numbers of both buyer and seller. A photograph(s) of the item(s) purchased and installed must be submitted.
- c. Herd Evaluation – The herd evaluation must first be approved by the Department of Agriculture. After receipt of the completed herd evaluation report from an approved herd evaluator on the Department's list of vendors, the Department will pay the vendor directly up to a maximum of \$175.00. The producer must follow the herd evaluation recommendations to qualify for further cost share assistance.

- d. Falsifying Program Applications, invoices or other documents submitted to the department will make you and your farm/tract ineligible to participate in present and/or future Tennessee Department of Agriculture programs and could result in civil litigation or criminal prosecution. Applicants/producers may be required to submit additional information to substantiate application or invoice information.
- e. The producer must also submit completed Substitute W-9 forms furnished by the Department.
- f. The producer may be asked to include additional substantiating information as required.

Step 4- Following Department of Agriculture review of the materials submitted and if no additional information or documentation is needed, the Department will request payment to the producer.

III. Cattle Genetic Improvement Program:

A. Cost shares and maximum reimbursements for genetic improvement program.

A producer is eligible for up to \$875.00 per year for genetic work. This includes a herd evaluation (up to \$175.00) and any one or a combination of bull purchase, lease or artificial insemination (up to \$700.00). (Note: A producer may also be eligible for up to \$850.00 in cattle handling facilities per year. See Section IV below.)

- 1. Conducting a herd evaluation (maximum \$175.00)
- 2. Purchase or lease of a bull (35% of cost up to maximum of \$700.00)
- 3. Purchase of semen and/or payment for technician fees for artificial insemination (35% of cost up to \$700.00 maximum).

B. Requirements for Participation in Genetic Cost Share Program:

- 1. The producer must register their premises with the Department of Agriculture.
- 2. The producer must be currently certified as completing the Beef Quality Assurance Program.
- 3. Approved cost share funds will be provided to producers on a reimbursement basis. Herd evaluation costs up to maximum will be paid directly to the vendor.
- 4. Payment shall only be made for approved cost-share items and is subject to percentages and maximums established by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Projects must be approved in advance.
- 5. Producers who intend to take part in the program must supply either a Social Security (SSN) or Tax ID (TIN) number to receive payment.
- 6. Ownership Requirements for purchased or leased bulls:
 - a. Ownership of purchased bulls must be maintained for a minimum of two successive breeding seasons not in the same year.

- b. Leased bulls can be leased for a minimum of 60 days up to one year.
 - c. Emergency early release of ownership is possible in case of physical or disposition problems, natural disasters or situations beyond the producer's control. Early release must be approved by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture following investigation of the circumstances necessitating the request.
- 7. Expected Progeny Differences (EPD) or Lifetime Net Merit Requirements:
 - a. A bull will qualify that is in the top 50% of his breed for at least two of the following EPD traits: Birth weight/Calving Ease; Weaning Weight; Yearling Weight; or Maternal Milk.
 - b. When selecting dairy breed bulls, sires must be in the top 80th percentile for Lifetime Net Merit. For Holstein Bulls, producers have the option of using the Type and Production Index (TPI) as their qualifying criteria instead of Lifetime Net Merit. Holstein Bulls must have a TPI rating of at least 1250 to qualify. For Holstein semen, the semen must have a TPI rating of 1400 or greater to qualify. Jersey bulls must be in the top 80th percentile for Lifetime Net Merit. For Jersey semen, producers must use the Production Type Index (PTI) or Jersey Production Index (JPI) as their qualifying criteria. Jersey semen must be from the top 100 bulls in the PTI or JPI. All other dairy breed bulls must be in the top 80th percentile for Lifetime net Merit.
- 8. All bulls purchased or leased through this program must pass a Breeding Soundness Evaluation prior to receiving cost-share funds. The cost of a BSE should be negotiated between the buyer and seller and can be included in the total cost of the bull purchase. A Breeding Soundness Evaluation Certificate from a licensed veterinarian must be included with the producer's request for reimbursement.
- 9. The producer will identify each bull purchased and/or leased with an electronic identification tag and provide the number to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.
- 10. Artificial Insemination Technicians utilized by producers receiving grant funds for reimbursement must be affiliated with Artificial Breeding Companies, or have been and currently are in the business to provide such service. Producers that have been certified to do artificial insemination through an accredited program (for example ABS or Select Sires, etc) can do their own AI work. However, producer time and labor will not be compensated; cost of semen, synchronism supplies and other artificial insemination supplies are eligible for cost share reimbursement. The cost of accredited artificial insemination technicians is eligible.
- 11. A producer can choose to have his/her herd evaluated on farm by an evaluator approved by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. This evaluation will assist the producer in determining what type of bull can best improve their herd to maximize the performance of the cows and to produce a more marketable calf crop. The producer must follow the recommendations of the evaluator for the bull/semen selected to qualify for additional cost share assistance. The

Department of Agriculture will pay up to \$175.00 for a herd evaluation conducted by an approved evaluator.

IV. Cattle Handling Facilities Program:

(UT Extension will supply advice and recommendations for facility and equipment needs.)

A. Cost shares and maximum reimbursements for cattle handling facilities program:

For beef and dairy cattle producers, 35% of cost up to maximum of \$850.
(Note: A producer may also be eligible for up to \$875.00 in cattle genetic improvement reimbursement per year. See Section III above.)

Producer time and labor are not eligible for cost share reimbursement; the cost of materials and hired or contracted labor for approved project is eligible for cost share reimbursement

B. Requirements for participation in cattle handling facilities cost share program for beef and dairy producers:

1. The cattle handling facility is located on premises that are registered with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.
2. The beef or dairy producer is currently certified as completing the Beef Quality Assurance Program.

C. Equipment and facilities eligible cost share:

Equipment listed is eligible for both beef and dairy producer unless stipulated beside the equipment listed.

1. Commercial headgate– usually considered the most important feature of the entire facility. It should be sturdy, safe, easily operated and have a quiet action. Recommended types are self-catcher and full-opening stanchion. Curved stanchions are not recommended.
2. Squeeze chute - provides complete restraint of the animal, is located immediately behind the headgate, and in front of the holding chute, securely fastened to both. The sides should move in and out together so that the animals are not thrown out of balance. “V” shaped sides support the cattle to prevent them from going down and choking.
3. Holding chute– constructed of wood or metal, located behind the headgate and fastened to it. Useful features include: (i) width adjustment for different size animals, (ii) removable side panels for easy access to the animal, (iii) a floor with non-slip surface, and (iv) a roof over both headgate and holding chute.
4. Curved or offset working chute– The working chute leads cattle from the crowding pen to the holding chute/squeeze. Its purpose is to hold cattle in a

line so that they can enter the treatment or loading area one at a time. The sides should be solid to prevent the animals from seeing the squeeze, people, and truck until almost there. Curved chutes work best. Whenever possible the working chute should be at least 20 feet long

5. Loading chute - The working chute leads cattle from the crowding or holding pen directly into a trailer or truck in order to transport the cattle. The loading chute may be capable of adjusting for the height of the vessel transporting the cattle.
6. Crowding tub and gate funnels cattle into the working chute. The tub should be designed to handle eight to ten cattle at a time. Funnel shaped crowding pens should be constructed with one straight side. The other side should enter the chute at an angle of about 30°. The large end of the funnel must be 8 to 12 feet wide. A circular crowding area with solid sides and a solid gate works best. The crowding gate should be equipped with a self-locking gate latch.
7. Weaning/Holding pen - a corral-like structure designed to encircle calves/cattle from other members of the herd for a short period of time.
8. Single animal scale (Beef only)– can be either mechanical, hydraulic load cell, or electronic load cell style.
9. Hoof trimming table or chute – Facilities designed specifically for foot care allows proper restraint of feet, dramatically improving the care of the cow and safety of the operator. Commercially built chutes are basically two types: (i) hoof trimming tables where cows are restrained and laid on their side for easy access to the feet, and (ii) a chute with restraining features that allow work to be done on any foot with the cow standing.
10. Headlock stanchions (Dairy only)– Placed along a feed manger for restraint of animals. Each headlock stanchion is equipped with a self-locking feature that is actuated when the cow puts her head in a stanchion and reaches for feed. Consider self-locking units that can be opened individually or as a group.
11. Catch lanes (Dairy only)– In milking parlors where cows travel in a single lane as they exit, individual animals may be easily diverted. Two parallel lanes, one for returning cows to the housing area, the other for catching cows, may be used for sorting cows for treatment as they exit the parlor. Cows can be held in a catch lane or can be moved into a pen equipped with self-locking stanchions. Catch lanes width should be 32 to 36 inches.
12. Palpation Cage- Provides a safe area for a veterinarian or technician to perform various breeding related activities.
13. Semen Tank- Provides storage so product can be used at a later time.

Questions concerning this program may be directed to the Cattle Improvement Initiative Coordinator at the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 40627, Ellington Agricultural Center, Nashville Tennessee 37204, phone 615-837-5304.
Email: Cattle.Improvement@state.tn.us